



Volunteer Groups Alliance 2019

The Volunteer Groups Alliance was created from the Forum led post-2015 working group that focused on ensuring volunteers were recognized within the United Nations system as an officially recognized stakeholder group active in working towards achieving Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. Upon official recognition, the VGA was formed and members approved a plan of action for 2017 - 2018 focused on three main areas

- National and regional level engagement
- Global level engagement, focused on the annual High-level Political Forum (HLPF)
- Documentation, indicator development and telling the story of how volunteers are contributing to sustainable development

To date, the work of the VGA has been focused on Global Level Engagement, particularly the High Level Political Forum. Members have successfully come together to draft position papers and examples of volunteer contributions to the SDGs, as well as provide recommendations to member states to improve their support of volunteers. An overview of this past year's work can be found [here](#).

In practice, the [Action Plan](#) is aspirational. Much of what the VGA set out to accomplish remains unfinished and in some cases, unstarted. It outlines many possible work streams, but no longer reflects the resources of Alliance Members to effectively be the voice of volunteers to member states individually as well as the overall UN system.

Therefore, in 2019, with the leadership of the Co-Chairs and the guidance of the Steering Group, The Volunteer Groups Alliance will work to streamline efforts to maximize our collective impact with limited resources. Our work will continue along three areas: National, Global, and Communications with clear actions associated with each.

National Level Engagement.

The Sustainable Development Goals, global in nature and in scope, will only be achieved at the local and national level. Each year, a subset of national governments self-select to produce reports detailing their progress towards achieving the SDGs. These Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) are publicly presented at the High Level Political Forum at the UN in July. Governments are instructed to consult and collaborate with civil society, including the Volunteer Groups Alliance, in the production of these reports. VNRs are tangible ways to interact with member states and align VGA work with the overall *UN Plan of Action; Integrating volunteers in the next decade* which calls for governments to establish, “regular and long term dialogue with volunteer-involving organizations during domestication of the sustainable development goals and throughout the planning, implementation and monitoring stages, to ensure continuous engagement with people.”

In the coming year, VGA members will view reports as the beginning of longer term conversations to advocate for the recognition and support of volunteers within members states. VGA members will choose ten existing reports and analyze how accurately and effectively they reflect the contribution of volunteers towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Analysis will result in a memorandum length



document to be shared with governments and can be used by members in national level work. Of the 51 countries scheduled to present reports in July 2019, ten have already submitted previous reports. Brazil, Azerbaijan, Chile, El Salvador, France, Guatemala, Indonesia, Philippines, Sierra Leone, and Turkey have existing reports that are an opportunity for VGA members to comment on. In the coming year, VGA members will:

- Identify good examples of volunteer contributions in existing Voluntary National Reviews
- Select a subset of ten VNR countries to review their submitted VNRs
- Analyze selected VNRs. Analysis of VNRs can include, but is not limited to:
 - Highlighting gaps where volunteerism could have been included
 - Sharing positive examples from peer VNR reports
 - Providing example language for future reports
 - Country level examples of volunteer contributions to SDGs
 - Comments on the enabling environment for volunteers and provide improvement recommendations
 - Critique of the report drafting process with a focus on how effectively volunteer contributions were solicited

VNR analysis provides a way for the sector to productively educate member states on the specific contributions of volunteers to the SDGs. The goal of the analysis is to have volunteerism recognized by member states in every VNR and increased recognition and support of volunteerism at the local level.

Global Engagement

As an official Stakeholder Group outlined in UN General Assembly Resolution [A/res/67/290](#) the VGA will continue to take advantage of the space and the rights afforded Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS) at the High Level Political Forum (HLPF), acknowledging member resource constraints will dictate the level of participation.

For the HLPF in 2019, the VGA will be active in the following ways.

- Members will author and submit to the UN for publication a statement on how volunteers contribute to sustainable development under the theme "*Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality*"
- Members will draft two-minute statements to be delivered in-person at the HLPF, in accordance with Major Group and other Stakeholder process, on the following Goals to be reviewed in 2019:
 - [Goal 4](#). Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
 - [Goal 8](#). Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
 - [Goal 10](#). Reduce inequality within and among countries
 - [Goal 13](#). Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
 - [Goal 16](#). Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide



access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

- **Goal 17.** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

- The Volunteer Groups Alliance Coordinator will ensure members are able to attend the HLPF in New York and have access to official meetings in accordance with UN guidelines
- The VGA will consider organizing a Side Event on the UN campus during the HLPF.

Communication; Telling the Story:

The Volunteer Groups Alliance maintains a presence on Social Media through the twitter account at www.twitter.com/volunteergroups The coordinator maintains this account and amplifies the messages of members in the following ways:

- Following all existing member twitter accounts
- Retweeting of volunteer stories
- Tweeting during select events such as the High Level Political Forum, International Volunteer Day, and Forum's annual IVCO conference
- Adding followers and connections as appropriate
- Retweeting select UN and Sustainable Development Goals and messages

The VGA focus on the National and Global engagement along with sharing and communicating the contributions of volunteers will lead to the increased recognition and support of volunteerism